Vol. XIV
Spring 2017

CALLIOPE

The Student Journal of Art and Literature

Calliope

The Student Journal of Art and Literature
Volume XIV - Spring 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2017 *Calliope* Chair was Adam Chiles. The *Calliope* Committee and Editorial Staff include Kama Storie, Rima Gulshan, Shirley N. Nuhn, Nataliya Schetchikova, Carol Thurston, Amy Flessert, William Fleming, Linda Millington, Tildon Turner, Susanna Ferrara, Stefanie Shipe, Jay Steere and Virginia Pates. Virginia Pates graciously and expertly curated the artwork. A special thank you goes to Kama Storie for her excellent guidance with *Calliope's* design.

Our thank you also goes to the many students who submitted their creative efforts for consideration. It is only through their courage and diligence that *Calliope* continues to materialize. We received many fine works this year but were limited in the number of entries we could publish. We hope, however, that students will persist in submitting their works to future editions of *Calliope*.

The *Calliope* Committee extends special appreciation to Annandale faculty and staff in the following offices, divisions, and committees for their continued and generous support of this endeavor:

- The Office of the Provost
- The Office of Student Development
- The Division of Languages and Literature
- The Division of Liberal Arts
- The Lyceum Committee
- The Media Manager and staff of the NOVA Office of Public Information and Publications
- The faculty and students of the Annandale Campus writing and art courses.

Calliope is indebted to Provost Dr. Pamela Hilbert and Interim Dean Jen Daniels for their encouragement and support. Special thanks also go to Judy Benavides, and Mary Atkins in the Division of Languages and Literature; to Dean Burton Peretti and Virginia Pates in the Division of Liberal Arts; to John Schmitz and Bob Hull of the Lyceum Committee; to Rizwan Rahman, Director of Campus Operations; and the Purchasing Department. Each of these people has supported this journal with financial commitments and expert advice.

Calliope is published each spring at the Annandale campus of the Northern Virginia Community College through a collaboration of the Departments of English and Liberal Arts under the sponsorship of the Division of Languages and Literature.

Submissions are welcomed from September through December each year at Calliope@nvcc.edu. Submission guidelines are available at http://www.nvcc.edu/calliope. *Calliope* reserves the right to reprint and present submitted works on the *Calliope* website and other media. Students interested in joining the *Calliope* staff as interns should contact the editors at the address above.

calliope *kal<e>i:opi. U.S. (Gr. Kallioph)*

(beautiful-voiced), the ninth of the Muses,
presiding over eloquence and heroic poetry.

1. An instrument consisting of a series of
steam-whistles toned to produce musical notes,
played by a keyboard like that of an organ;

2. attrib. calliope hummingbird,
a hummingbird, sellula ***calliope***, of the
Western United States and Mexico.
Oxford English Dictionary

Jackie L. McCarthy

Y = MX + C

My life has been a straight
Line—pushing forward,
Never looking back, trying
Not to look back—
But I am nowhere—I
Am moving to nothing…
To infinity. A line
Is the loneliest concept
In math.
I want
      to be
            a circle—
                  A circle
                   meets somewhere.
             Lines overlap,
       You get
second chances.

Calliope First Prize 2017 - Artwork

Carrie Wilmarth

Searching for Self

Oil Painting

Calliope First Prize 2017- Fiction

Claire Quin

What Rises From the Hungry Grass

The Irish moon curled like a crafty smile over the peat bog, illuminating the midnight world in its golden hue. Eileen had hiked her skirt up past her knees and far over her wellies, careful not to lose one as she sloshed through the mud. She didn't imagine she could explain a boot having gone missing overnight to her mother in the light of day. The rain began again, just a drizzle this time, but now she could make out Seamus Flanagan's fuzzy form through the distortion of the water, sunken into their meeting place past his ankles.

"You didn't need to wait for me, you know," Eileen said, leaning into his body for a moment and stealing a kiss.

"I knew you'd come eventually."

He grinned, then, softening all his features before claiming another kiss—longer, sweeter, as he pressed her to him. "Let's find somewhere drier."

She nodded, hand clasped in his and squeezing like it was her last chance. It could be; she wasn't sure how long they would have, whether her family or Seamus' da would accept her when someone noticed. They were bound to notice soon, she mused, passing her other hand across her belly as she had found herself doing of late. It wasn't the kind of...

There was a hand. A hand, stretching out of the bog, illuminated in the moonlight and blurred by the rain, like the devil rising from a wet hell to claim sinners, orange fingers clasped talon-like around the toe of Eileen's boot.

"Seamus!" she cried, "Help!"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!"

Seamus clutched her hand harder, tugging her through the muck as they splashed away and away.

A thought came to Seamus while stumbling through the bog—an unpleasant, unbidden, altogether unwanted thought.

"Eileen," he panted, drawing them to a halt, "We have to go back."

"The hell you say!" she exclaimed, taking a step back, "I'm never going back again. It's the Devil himself, come to claim us!"

"No, Eileen, think about it. Did the hand look...womanly, to you?"

"No! I don't know—maybe? I'm not going back." She shuffled from one foot to the other and back again, the bog squelching beneath her to refill the empty space.

"Because my da, you know how he gets. You know."

She nodded, slowly, eyes narrowing to slits.

"You know he'd hit my mum."

She nodded again. Everyone knew, and some didn't blame her for up and leaving for it.

"I'm not sure she left."

"What—"

“My da, he would threaten sometimes to bury her alive. Out here, where nobody would find her body. Where nobody'd bless her.”
Eileen looked into his haunted eyes, mirrored perfectly by her own.
“I can't leave her. She's my mum!” he said.
She nodded, sighing.
“I don't want to tell anyone, though. My da isn't a good man, but he's sick now. He'd die in jail.”
“But—”
“Here's what we'll do. We'll bring her to the church graveyard, bury her somewhere there. Somewhere out of the way, but where I can go and pray to her sometimes.”
“I think your da deserves to be strung up, burying her alive.”
“Don't say that!”
The wild light in Seamus' eyes scared Eileen a little, and she didn't like the way he was shaking her shoulders, so she nodded again.
“This has to be our secret. Nobody can know but us. Nobody can know.”
“I reckon it was all the rain, carried her to the surface,” he stated as they tried to find the spot again by the golden light of the moon splintered across the water. It was slow going, and Eileen worried they could spend all night out there.
“I'm not just doing this for me,” said Seamus when he noticed her face, “ Anyone could find her, and your parents might not let me marry you if my da becomes a murderer.”
“Wait—marry?”
“Don't you want to?” he frowned, “I thought you would, with the baby coming.”
“You knew?” she whispered, blinking back tears, “I mean, you want me?”
“Of course I want you, Eileen! Haven't I shown you I want you? You're having my baby—of course I want you! Don't you want me?”
She opened her mouth, altogether unsure of what might come out, when Seamus stopped.
“This is her.”
She didn't look like Seamus' mum when she was out of the ground. She didn't look like much of anything. In fact, Eileen wasn't sure the body was a she at all.
It was orange, shiny in the same way as the mother-of-pearl earrings her mother wore to church every week. Bony and emaciated, it was the kind of thing Eileen might expect to appear in tales of the old aos sí, the fairies rumored to live in mounds and hills.
“Are you sure this is your mum?” she whispered, wondering if she might never have to touch it again, if Seamus might say it wasn't, and let them leave and pretend they had never seen anything that night. “Didn't your mum have hair?”
“Who else could it be?” he snapped, slapping his hair from his face, “Nobody else has gone missing. It's her.”
The thing was heavy for its gaunt form, even with Seamus carrying most of the weight, and reflected the moonlight into his straining face, distorting it into something older, something harder. Something other than the Seamus she knew.
They left it in the woods outside the church, Eileen swearing that she would return the next night to help bury it. The moon was dipping low on the horizon, and Seamus was worried they would need time and shovels to get the job done right.

She hid her peat-covered clothes under her bed, and sunk under the covers, falling into a sleep without dreams.

In the morning she was bleary-eyed, but splashed stale water from the basin on her face and washed the peat off her arms, deeming herself half-presentable when the commotion from outside filtered through her bedroom window. Directly below her were a group of peat cutters, men who chopped the top layer from the bog when it was dry to sell as kindling. They seemed to have cornered a young man, maybe from the next town over, although looking down she could only make out his explosion of bright orange curls and not his face.

"I swear," he belched, and that was Aiden who lived not a mile away, she was sure of it.

"I swear," he said again, "I was on my way back from the pub and the fear gorta, the hungry man of the aos sí, he was just standing there, leaning against a tree!"

"You don't lie about these things, man, even drunk!" someone near-shouted at the speaker, and most made sounds of agreement and nodded their heads, but a handful were murmuring about the hungry grass, about a famine come again.

Maybe Aiden could tell that a few believed him. "I swear on my father's grave! Outside the churchyard, by a tree! The fear gorta was there!"

"He's not lying." One of the older O'Riley boys announced it from behind the crowd.

"We checked—there's a body there," added another O'Riley. "Orange and thin and wrinkled, with skin like leather. It looks like the devil but I'll bet it's Flanagan's wife."

Seamus needed to know. Barefoot and braids streaming behind her, Eileen ran as fast as she could through the dew-spattered grass and up the dirt path to his house, pounding between gulps of breath on Seamus' broken door. It swung back and forth and back again on its hinges with the knocks.

Someone—Seamus' da—yelled for him to answer it, and Seamus appeared sleep-ruf fled and in his nightshirt.

"Eileen? Why are you—why—"

"They found her."

"Damn," Seamus growled, running four fingers through his mussed hair.

"What do we do?"

"They won't stop me from marrying you!" He grabbed her close. "I'm raising that baby with you, no matter what anyone says!"

The world around them fell into silence as Seamus' da emerged half-dressed at the door.

"Eileen? You're not..."

She stuck out her chin, unwilling to cry, and placed a hand over her belly and a hand in Seamus'.

"We love each other." She was proud of how steady her voice came out. "And we're getting married. That's all anyone needs to know."

They did string up Seamus' da, just like Eileen had wanted, and Seamus' eyes, how they burned! She had never seen fire like that, but then, it was the fire in him that loved her. That she hoped loved her forever. That was what she clung to, how much he loved her, as they moved into Seamus' house on the hill, and he went to cut peat, and the baby boy was beautiful, and as the years went by, no matter what happened, she told herself that he had vowed to always love her.

Calliope Second Prize 2017 - Artwork

Sina Eghtedari

Pathos

Scratchboard

Calliope First Prize 2017- Nonfiction

Nicholas Michael Frazee

Homecoming

They had given me a number and then had taken my identity away. Now I was standing in a line, handcuffed with a large, blue, plastic box in my hands. Chained to the other inmates, I could care less about my discomfort; it was time to go home. A year is a long time to not see family, or talk to girls, or try new foods. I missed my old life, I missed McDonalds! One by one they called us forward, to cut the bracelets with the pictures of our former selves, from the last time, we were on the streets. My turn came; I asked if I could keep it. The officer looked at me and said, "Tell you what, come back next time and I'll give you one just like it." I laughed and said, "No offense, but I hope I never see you again."

Then it was time. The gates opened and the room turned from colorless torment, to a large, beautiful, ornate looking room. That's when I saw him. The man I loved but I knew had mixed emotions for me. My dad had a confused and tired look on his face. I ran up to him and whimpered in his arms. It felt pathetic. He looked at me and said "Buck up and be a man." Unconcerned by his comment, I looked away and saw the exit. The door looked amazing and I walked towards it with no hesitation. I opened it and a blast of fresh air hit me like a train.

The world looked incredible. I had even missed the way grass felt. It was four a.m. and the stars were still out. My dad and I walked to the car. We drove home and I couldn't help but stare, amazed at the world around me. It was like seeing an old friend, the path we took home I had driven many times. Of course, there was more than just nostalgia. I had been stuck in a confined room for so long. I could feel the claustrophobia escaping me when I saw so much open space around me. We got home and the rest of my family had gone to bed. The lights were off but I knew it looked just like the way I left it. There were kid's toys all over the floor from my sister, a messy kitchen because I was the only one who ever cleaned, my dogs bed was full of fluff from some poor toy that met its demise, even my dad's guitars hadn't been moved from the living room.

I could smell the food my family had cooked before I got home. Overcome with joy, my mouth started to water. While I was away, my parents didn't put any money on my books, for me to purchase store bought things, so I had to hustle for what I needed. For the most part, all I had to eat was revolting government food. However, some of my hard work had started to benefit me, after giving an inmate a tattoo. I was given a thing called a swole, made by another prisoner. It was like a burrito made of ramen noodles, summer sausage, and hot fries. Not bad but by no means good. Regardless, I raided my parents' refrigerator and stuffed as much food in my mouth as I could fit. I sat there listening to my dad stomping up the stairs on his way to bed. He never said a word to me the entire ride home. I looked at my reflection in the window and saw myself. I looked like a ravenous animal; I hadn't seen a clear reflection of myself in so long.

My arms and chest were bigger than I remembered but my face was thinner. Even with my cheeks stuffed, I could see it. I looked like a monster, felt like one too. Tears filled my eyes. Sitting there pathetically, my mouth still full of food, I cried silently until I fell asleep at the table.

Calliope Second Prize 2017 - Poetry

Rashika Budhathoki

A Dark Night

Sounds of birds and frogs,
Howls of owls from some hidden logs,
Desperate calls for the perfect and dark,
Where unknown creatures peek and lark.

Creepy reptiles crawl beneath,
Audacious aviators reach zenith,
Anxious wait for the perfect midnight rises,
Until the glow comes full of surprises.

Rivers and lakes are quiet and content,
Grooved banyan trees hide their dent,
Anticipation of the perfect gloom lacks,
As the dark slowly, carefully backs.

The dark night feels frightened,
while everything else gets enlightened.

Calliope Third Prize 2017 - Artwork

Moises Gomez

Hope - Bogota, Columbia

Photograph

Calliope First Prize 2017 - ESL Prose

Suhana Thapa

Search for Heaven

On July 31st 2016, my parents came back from Manang, Nepal, and my mother could not stop herself from talking about how beautiful Tilicho Lake, the highest lake in the world, was. I always look up to my mother as an inspiration and this story she told me blew my mind. "Driving to Manang village was very scary," she went on, "the road was so dangerous—only one jeep at a time." The danger of the trip she mentioned gave me shivers down my spine. She also said the stars looked so close to earth, it gave you the feeling of being in some other world. I wanted to experience what she experienced as well, so that day, October 16, 2016, finally came. On October 16, my mom and I packed our bags and headed to Manang.

On our way to Manang, we came across this mystic hill named "Swargadwari" and that beautiful rock hill was wider and taller than any hills I had ever seen before. The driver of our jeep explained that the hill is known as a "stairway to heaven" and, dear God, it was! Half of the hill was covered by clouds and because of that, it looked so magical. Along the way came another breath-taking waterfall, charmed by its fresh scent and breeze. I felt like I was in another world just like how my mother felt, where life was nothing but beautiful. I was startled by the charisma of Manang, and for the first time in my life, I was living in the moment. I had nothing to worry about. I was free.

It was eight in the evening when we arrived at our destination Manang. We had been inside the jeep for thirteen hours straight and as I took my first step out of the jeep, I screamed. I screamed at the top of my voice, and my mom laughed. She knew exactly why I was screaming and at what. The night was so beautiful; my eyes could not believe what I was witnessing. It was the stars and I stood there facing up, gazing at stars for a straight 20 minutes. The weather was chilly as the altitude was 3,519 meters. When we were hiking towards the base-camp, I had thoughts that changed me forever.

As a kid, I always thought about what heaven would look like and when I grew up, I gave up thinking about heaven, making myself believe it all belonged to fairytales we heard as kids and suddenly I felt like I was hit by a lightning. I paused and I could feel the calmness taking over the anxiety I always had, and that's when I realized that this was the heaven I had always been searching for. I had never felt gratitude towards life. That night at base camp I was apprehensive. My perception changed towards life. I adored the local people of the base camp, how their world was without technology and how everyday chores in their life were to take care of people like us, their guests. They treated us more like gods; that's how it is in Nepal: Guests are equal to gods. That's what I thought at first, but soon I realized that we were no gods to them, but we were like their family. At minus 9 degrees Celsius in the early morning, they would be up preparing hot water and warm food for us, and not just that but also food that we could take with us during our hike to the lake. They didn't do it for money; they did it out of love. They taught me how to love without expecting anything in return.

When we reached the highest lake on earth, I had learned and experienced life. I learned how to love but most importantly, I learned that the heaven I was in search for had always

been within me. It was my life and it is all about how I want to perceive and live it and make every day of my life a heaven to walk in. My trip to Manang taught me who I want to be and how I want my world to be. I will always be thankful.

Natalia Rincon

Observation #5

Oil Painting

Calliope Second Prize 2017 - Fiction

Mousa Toure

On a Friday

Once upon a time in a little English village in the early 1800s, a man was dying. He was gravely ill, of a disease no one could quite understand. Who knew mononucleosis was so fatal? He was a young man too, no older than 30. His life was ordinary, from the beginning until now. The Monday he was born was one of the happiest days in his family's life, naturally. And naturally on the following Tuesday he was christened as a child of the lord.

Where was his lord? he wondered, as he lay dying. His wife and daughter by his bedside weeping and sobbing. Or at least his daughter was. His wife was made of sterner stuff. She wouldn't allow a soul to see her break down, none but those closest to her. That's how he knew she was the one, the way she guarded herself and all secrets. Someone he knew he could trust with his heart for the rest of their days. It was only a shame those days would be cut so short. Much shorter than he had ever expected.

It was only last Thursday he had become so deathly ill. He thought he would work through it, through his work as a banker, he would persevere, to help his family make ends meet. But steadily he could no longer hold on and it was on this free day he was anything but well, confined to his bed, worse for wear.

He was told it would happen like this when he was younger. He didn't make much of it, silly superstitions of those dark-skinned travelers. No one trusted them, but he was drawn to their nomadic lifestyle, he had to see and meet them, those Romani. How they danced and played. How his parents screamed and refused to allow him to be out among them in their strange culture. Especially after an elderly crone took his hands and stared deep into his eyes to speak his name despite him never speaking it himself.

He remembered the words she spoke from her thin withered lips were ordered and precise with a voice that was hers and yet not hers. A voice that was deep and cold and straightforward. A voice that after all these years he never forgot. And he never forgot what she said, not one line. Her words that recounted his life, not in explicit detail. In fact it was so vague that it was easy to see this as a ploy, a game to be had with him. His birth, his christening, simple things to guess. His marriage, his death? All yet to come, all so general. There was no possibility in its truth.

And yet as he lay dying, and the words echoed through his memories, the voice returned. But not in the fever of his death. His eyes squinted through sweat that burned his eyes and he saw one in a cloak. He was too delirious to have known that earlier that day a cloaked figure came to town, that they came with a cart and a pony, that they asked for lodgings at the seediest bar, that they asked for the sick, deviant, and weary, that they enjoyed their tea with a zest of lime, that they barged into the house with great protest from the doctor, that they spoke into the doctor's ear and the doctor had subsequently cried himself into a corner, that they were here for him.

The figure cloaked, tall and unseen, spooked the man's daughter and drew much

protestation from his wife. The figure did not seem like it but they were encumbered with many treatments, many he could not begin to fathom, many that seemed odd with their petroleum-based vials imprinted with numbers that began with the letters Rx. The cloaked figure drew one such a vial with a liquid that was both clear and green and they placed it on the dying man's lips with little hesitation or protestation. And the figure left.

And just like that the fever broke, on that Saturday the man was well and renewed, the illness fading as quickly as it had arrived. The figure in the cloak having long left before thanks could be given and on that Sunday in celebration they set fire to the man's coffin. Death would have to wait another day.

People strolled, people lived, jogging, walking dogs, chatting with friends, staring at rectangles in their hands that gave them the entire world and more. The man was seated on a park bench by a fountain by a stranger. "And today? Death will still have to wait," The man said cheekily to a stranger seated beside him. The stranger beside him sat agape, questions running through their mind.

"So that poem that old gypsy told you was…"

"Ah ah ah, very rude, they don't like being called that, you know. And I did a lot of searching in my years, finding out why they said what they said to me. Turns out they definitely weren't Romani, or even human. Not even the same person anymore I'd gather. It was just the most convenient way for them to travel at the time."

"And you…"

"I have a debt to society to pay and a man...or woman...or…someone to see about a magical mystery cure." He rolled up his sleeves and doffed his top hat.

"Until then, you keep safe on Saturdays. That's when Death goes on a warpath for the one that got away!" The man stood up from the seat and stretched energetically and began to stride away. The stranger, still awestruck from the story, stood up and called out to the man.

"But…who…what are you!?" they asked.

"Solomon Grundy," The man replied with a cheeky smile. "Born on a Monday, and still not dead on a Saturday!"

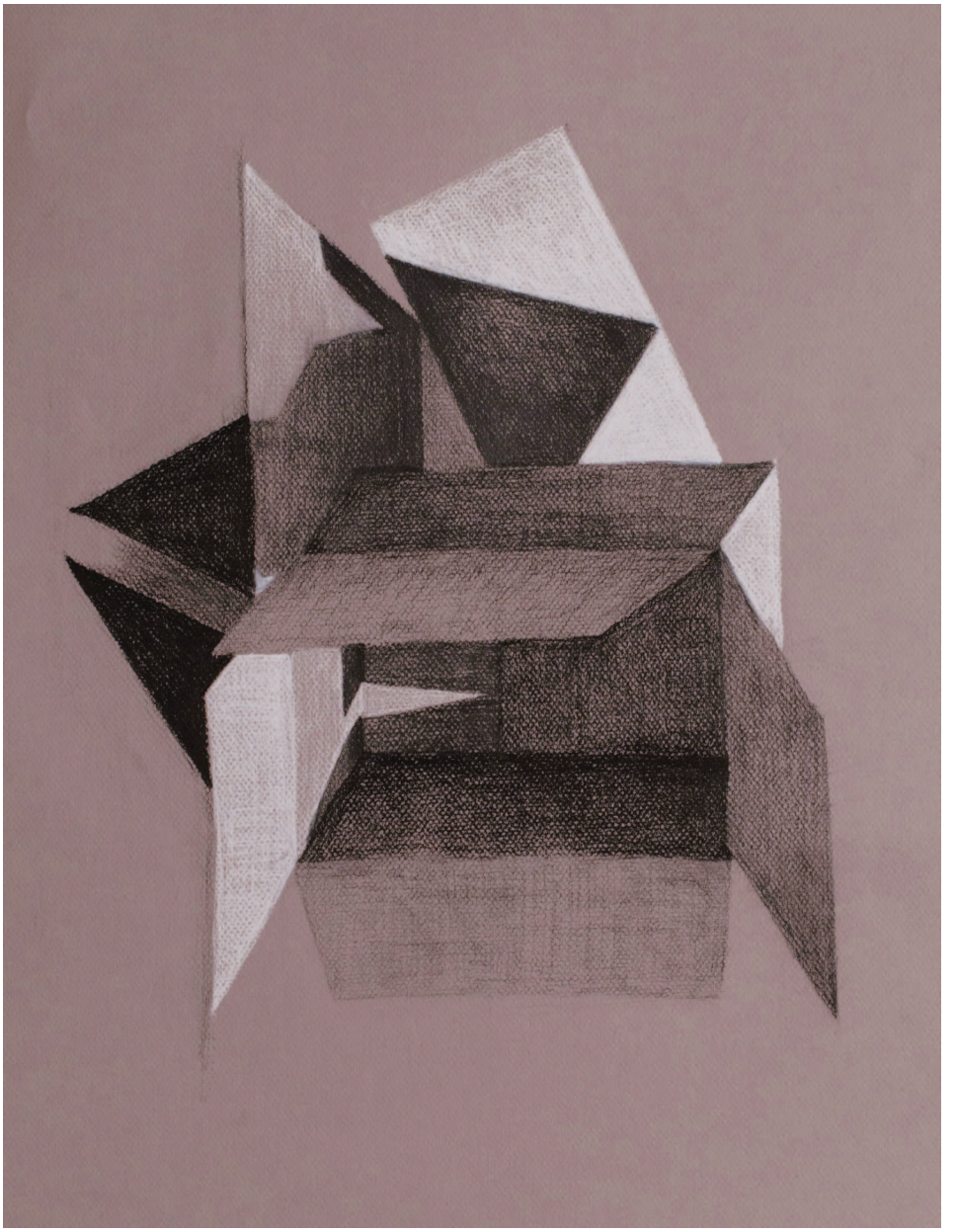
***

Solomon Grundy
Born on a Monday
Christened on a Tuesday
Married on a Wednesday
Took ill on a Thursday
Grew worse on a Friday
Died on a Saturday
Buried on a Sunday
That was the end of
Solomon Grundy

Solomon Grundy
Born on a Monday
Christened on a Tuesday
Married on a Wednesday
Took ill on a Thursday
Cured on a Friday
Lived on a Saturday
Disappeared on Sunday
What ever happened to
Solomon Grundy?

Bianca Juliani

Box in Flight - Expanding Planes



Charcoal and Chalk on Grey Paper

Olivia Grotenhuis

Yellow Glasses

Ink and Markers on Paper

Calliope Second Prize 2017 - Nonfiction

Carolyn Schaumburg

Growing Up

The dichotomy between finding a sense of self and pursuing happiness is pretty much a defining factor of being in your early twenties. Early adulthood smacks humans in the face, and expects stability from creatures who, less than a year or two prior, had to ask to pee. I'm astounded that some people around me seem to have a vague sense of who they are, what they want from their life, and how to get it. Did they come out of the womb with a calculator and a love for engineering? Or did they perform their own mother's C-section, simultaneously getting a college recommendation from their doctor for medical school? Perhaps they casually slid out of their warm nine-month residence, with perfect hair and teeth, ready to sell mansions to millionaires. This baby would smile at his mother's doctor and ask if he's considered taking up a mortgage. Whoever these children are I'm sure their parents are proud of them. Lucrative from their first bottle sip, and emotionally independent from their first diaper change, they know what they want from life. These babies probably started saving for retirement at thirteen. Perhaps they never crawled around on all fours—it would've been too demeaning for them. They just waltzed out of the delivery room one day ready for life and not worried about their future. At one day old they had it figured out. I feel as those these hypothetical babies have the secret to life and just aren't telling me. I hate them and want to be them all at once. Compared to these babies, I came out of my mother kicking and screaming. I knew that I wasn't ready for people to talk to me about careers, ask me what I want from life, and have expectations for anything I do. I was probably gasping for air saying, "Doctor, please, it appears you've made a massive mistake. Put me back where you found me, and we both can forget this embarrassing situation ever happened. Agreed?" And then I probably pooped everywhere, made a gigantic mess of everything, and cried some more.

Growing up aren't we supposed to find things we are good at? I once had a friend who could fit an entire fist in her mouth. I'm not sure how she's going to turn that talent into a lucrative career. Wait. I do have something in mind she could use it for, but I'm pretty sure it wouldn't make her parents proud. On the other hand, some children become so good at things in youth they become prodigies. Look at the female Olympic gymnast team—they knew what they wanted and went for it. Lorde was only seventeen when 'Royals' played on every radio station practically nonstop. Some children pick up a violin and think to themselves, "Ah, yes. I'm a musical prodigy. I know what I want to do, and I'm good at it. My parents will be so proud." This resonates a fundamental envy on a very deep and personal level. These childhood successes drive home the point that I'm a failure in comparison. No one has a reason to compare me to Taylor Swift, but that doesn't mean that I'm not going to. I know other people feel similarly too. The sense of being so young but already being a

failure. That doctor should've taken one look at me, realized I was not ready for human life, and shoved me right back in for another nine months. Maybe that's what

I needed when I was a baby, because I am clearly not ready for anything adulthood is demanding of me.

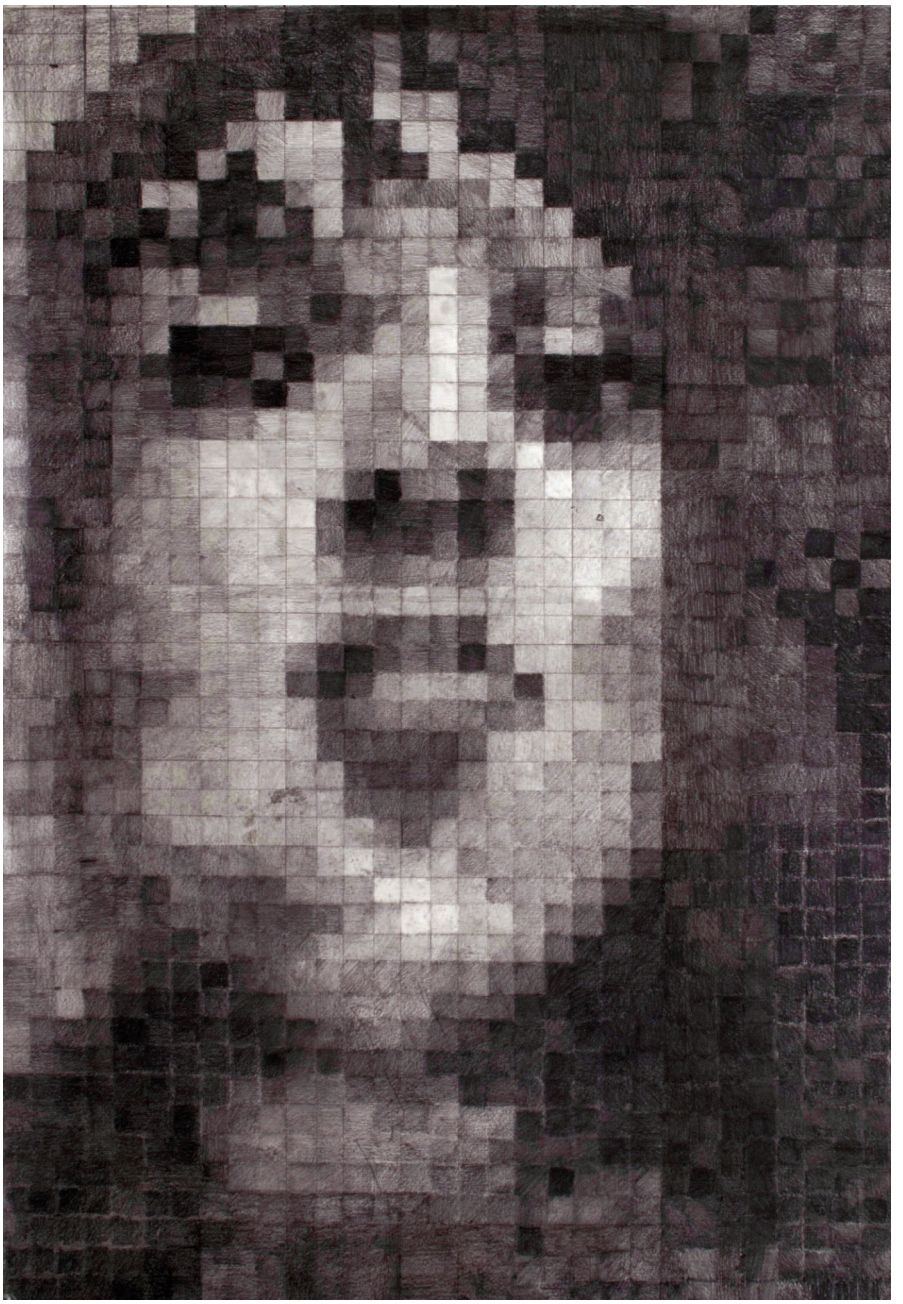
Money. Making money. Having your own money. Ultimately that's what it comes down to, isn't it? But what if as a grown up, anything I was good at wouldn't make money? I did theatre, sang and spoke in front of audiences. I loved it. I won't love being a waitress the rest of my life. I loved writing. Nothing made me happier than disappearing into a book for days. I'm not an expert on what writers make, so I went to my father and he said, "It's not easy being a writer unless you're born rich." I'm not born rich so I guess I'm screwed. I love music. I wanted to pursue it. Then I met a handsome boy who was 24. He told me he had a BA in history and a minor in music. I asked him what he did for a living. He's a barista at Starbucks, and really in debt.

I suppose I could squash my emotions deep down inside and become an accountant or lawyer. I could cry in my car as I study calculus or e-commerce. I could relinquish myself of my hopes and dreams. Say goodbye to any ambitions and make responsible decisions with my life. But then I think to myself, what if thirty years from now the only thing that makes me happy inside is seeing the bottom of a bottle. What if I find rum or vodka to be the only thing that can fill the void left by not pursuing anything I'm passionate about? There is probably an engineering graduate out there doing tons of cocaine, or an accountant who does heroin. There is similarly a barista who is an alcoholic, or a waitress who does meth. It appears in life you either set up a void by trying to make money, or by ignoring the fact that you don't have money by doing drugs. I suppose anybody can have an existential crisis. It doesn't matter what your tax bracket is.

I'm still waiting for something to make sense. I'm waiting for something to feel right. When will I know what to do if I have no idea what I'm doing? I'd like to ask my parents what they were thinking bringing someone into this world. It's chaotic, unpredictable, and really confusing. I didn't ask for this. This never ending sense of dread and uncertainty when I think about my future. I wish to once again have my childhood innocence and youthful ignorance to everything. Instead every day that passes I become more unsure of where I stand and who I will be. All I can do in the meantime is try to be a good person, and maintain the hope that one day I'll figure it out.

Danielle Clover-Flick

Self-Portrait / Grid a la Chuck Close



Graphite on Paper

Calliope Second Prize 2017 - ESL Prose

Chi Duong

Why Do People Commit Suicide?

Life is an arena. Each of us is a soldier. We are supposed to fight and survive. Many people succeed in dealing with their problems. On the other hand, some people find it difficult to handle their issues. Moreover, they find the way to death to end their lives. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, there are 121 suicides per day on average and 44,139 Americans die by suicide each year. There are three main causes of suicide: depression, traumatic experience, and relationship problems.

First of all, depression is the number one reason which leads to suicide. There are several sources of depression such as financial problems, education struggles, and unemployment. Korea's youth has one of the highest suicide rates. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Koreans aged 15 to 24 ("Voice of Youth"). Due to the fact that the education in Korea is quite competitive and stressful, the number of students who kill themselves is increasing intensely. Another example is Robin Williams, a Hollywood actor, who hanged himself at the aged of 63 after a long time of suffering from depression ("Hollywood Gossip"). It is difficult for negative people to find a way to revitalize themselves. They are willing to die to end their stress. For them, death is the only solution to get rid of their struggles.

Second, traumatic experience also makes people commit suicide. People might go through many horrible things throughout their lives such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and bullying. Victims will be too helpless, embarrassed, ashamed, and scared to keep living. They might be obsessed with their tragic past. They couldn't forget what happened and struggle every day to cope with their pain. As a result, victims tend to commit suicide to wind up their physical as well as deep psychological wounds.

Lastly, relationship problems. Being in an abusive relationship, not feeling appreciated or going through breakups can let somebody kill himself or herself. When people give so much love and faith, they expect to take back the same thing. If they are betrayed, they would be shocked and disappointed about the truth. Many people can't stand their losses and try to die. This sounds illogical but relationships affect people so much in life. We have heard stories of people who killed themselves because they were lovelorn. People live for love but some people want to die for it.

In conclusion, depression, traumatic experience, and relationship problems are the most common reasons which lead to suicide. Despite how tough life is, humans were born to deal with it. We have only one chance to live. Consequently, we should appreciate our lives and not give up easily.

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Calliope Third Prize 2017 - Poetry

Dixy Ortiz Osorio

Americanized

"I want to go back to my home country.
They see me as an outsider."
Ten years later
I'm still an outsider.
An outsider to my Latino community
And an outsider to my American Community

See, both cultures have become my identity
Tamales are my favorite to eat, especially with some chile
The dance of bachata and merengue are engraved in my feet
But my family still does not see me as Latina enough
They say my Spanish sounds like that of an American
And when I use Spanglish, they look at me like I'm a foreigner

On the other hand, my friends see me as too Latina
When they come to my house and they see all of the Latin products in the kitchen,
they say I'm too Latina.
They say I'm too Latina when I want to eat tortilla with everything.

Both categorize me into only one,
as if I only have the right to check off one from the Ethnic/Race category.
Why is it that they make it seem like I have to choose only one?
I'm both an American and Latina
Both are deeply rooted in my being.

Dawoon Jeong

Fruit Aglow

Oil Painting

Calliope Third Prize 2017 - Fiction

Julianne Day Bieron

Of the Qu'im

As I sit down to write this, I marvel at the privilege I've been given, but also the horrible curse, for the fact that I am the one chosen to relay the information that follows. After all, the Qu'im are a secretive race, and only after years of studying these fae folk have I finally been allowed to talk about them to my peers. I shall start from the beginning, I suppose. After all, who are the Qu'im?

Qu'im. In their native language of Qu'azi, Qu'im is a combination of the word Quor, meaning bright, and Ima, meaning star. Combined, they create Qu'im, the Bright Star Folk. The name is aptly termed, as they tend to only come out of hiding to our world on bright nights. Other nights, they reside within their own realm, Gynum. Gynum is a term in Qu'azi that has no meaning other than what it is: the realm of the Qu'im. Or at least, that's what they've told me.

Let's move on to their physical attributes. There are three types of Qu'im, unlike the two human sexes. There are the Morph'i, which are akin to our females. Then there are Morph'o, which are similar to males. Finally there are the strange yet beautiful Corz'a, which are rare even for Qu'im. They have no correspondence to human sexes, but are instead only able to reproduce with other Corz'a. How, I am unsure still at this time. It will take more rigorous study to figure that one out.

Morph'i, what we would consider females, are larger than their counterparts. They stand roughly at two feet high and have bright, translucent wings that serve no practical purpose other than for beauty, at least not that I have found. Generally, Morph'i have silver or white hair, often with a dyed strand of either pink or purple that is applied upon reaching adulthood. Eye color is usually a light shade of blue, purple, or pink.

Morph'o, slightly smaller than the Morph'i, have black wings. These, also, seem to serve only a superficial purpose as opposed to a practical one. Their hair is also black, often with red or orange applied in streaks upon reaching adulthood. Eye color ranges from blue to red to green, and everywhere in between.

Skin color for both Morph'i and Morph'o ranges from light blue to pink to a light orange. Overall, these two sexes are quite similar, with only superficial differences. This, however, changes when we observe the third sex, the Corz'a.

Corz'a, as I'm told by the Qu'im leadership, is a Qu'azi term that combines the suffix 'a' which has no corresponding meaning in English, and the word Corzor which means Crystal. Again, an apt name for the Corz'a. Corz'a have wings just like the others, but stand much smaller at about one foot. Their wings are a dark blue, and their skin is white. Their hair color is blue, also. Unlike the other two sexes, Corz'a can, and do, fly. Their wings are fully functional. Corz'a eye color is entirely white; they are blind. This is the result of where they have been traditionally forced to live: underground caves. Years of exile in these dark places means their hearing and sense of touch have been heightened, but their eyesight was

sacrificed. Only in recent years have the other Qu'im sexes allowed Corz'a members into their above ground communities. From here on out I will refer to specific Corz'a by whatever pronoun they told me to call them in English, for the pronoun used in Qu'azi has no corresponding English word.

But I'm sure there is one question on your mind, dear reader. How did I come to know the Qu'im? If they are so secretive, how came I to discover them? I will endeavor to relay that to you now.

My first encounter with a Qu'im was a Corz'a, actually, many years ago. Le'an was her name. I was traversing a newly discovered cavern in Eastern Croatia when lo and behold my light landed on this magnificent creature. It didn't run from me, but instead approached me cautiously, much as I did it. It seemed as curious about me as I was of it.

"Hello," I said.

It jumped backwards, unsure of what to do.

"Neha," it said to me. "Neha logo es."

I have come to realize now that "neha logo es" is a term in Qu'azi for "what are you." However I had no idea how to respond at the time. I merely stared back at it. It stared at me with its pale, white, sightless eyes. Then it turned and flew off into the depths of the cavern. So naturally, I ran after it.

Eventually, I came to an underground pool. The Corz'a jumped beneath the water. Without even hesitating, I dove in, only to appear in a different world. I had to blink as my eyes adjusted to the sudden bright sunlight. The grass was a greener green than any I had ever come across. The trees, for there certainly were trees though they seemed different than ours, had bark of bright silver and leaves of turquoise. The sky was an immaculate blue, so blue that I thought I must be looking into another ocean.

To my surprise, I was not wet at all, but instead completely dry. One never would've thought I'd just jumped into a pool in the middle of a cavern system. Even I was beginning to doubt myself. The Corz'a I had been following had disappeared, and here I was in another world, unsure of how I was to get back to mine.

I marveled at the beauty all around me. The silver barked trees felt more alive to the touch than anything I had experienced before. I could almost feel the life in them. To this day, I still don't know how they grew such beautiful trees, so beautiful that when I look at our basic trees in our world, I cannot help but be dissatisfied.

I remember walking for what felt like hours until suddenly I was halted by a group of Morph'o warriors and the Morph'i chieftess. The spears of the Morph'o poked at me and I scrambled away from them, completely terrified. All it took was a hand signal from the blue Morph'i chieftess and they stopped their prodding. I will never forget the beauty in her voice when she spoke to me in English.

"What are you doing in Gynum? This is land of the Qu'im, not humans! Trespassing is punishable by death!"

Completely stunned silent at this point, I merely gaped at her, my mouth open and tongue wagging like an idiot. This… this fairy creature had spoken to me in my own language. Somehow I managed to get my act together because I did end up responding.

"I have no idea," was all I said.

The Morph'i chieftess laughed lightly. "Look, Qu'im, upon this foolish human! It does not know where it is or why it is here!"

The Morph'o warriors laughed as well. At this point, I was feeling somewhat insulted. I was about to say something when one of the warriors stopped laughing and pointed at my shirt. He spoke quickly to the chieftess who immediately stopped her laughing and stared at me in wonder.

"You bear the sign of three, human. What say you?"

I remember being distinctly confused by this point. I looked where she pointed on my shirt and saw I was wearing a tee-shirt with a large, blue triangle on it.

"The triangle?" I asked in confusion.

"The Sign of Three!" insisted the chieftess. "Are you the chosen one? The one who will unite the lands of Terra and Gynum?"

By now I was simply flabbergasted. Signs of three, chosen ones, Gynum and Terra? I had no idea what she was talking about. Little did I realize that my arrival had been prophesied thousands of years before by the Qu'im spirits called the Lo'az, as the human who would bring about the combining of their world and ours through teaching us foolish humans about their existence. Through me, they hoped to bring about peaceful coexistence with humans, and it is my job to help them.

I hope that through this article you will come to appreciate the beauty of the Qu'im as I have, and see that together humans and Qu'im can prosper side by side. I will write down what I experienced here, and maybe someday I will bring a Qu'im back to Terra with me. Until then, stories will have to suffice.

The beauty of that world so far surpasses our own that it must be shared. I will continue to visit Gynum to learn more of the Qu'azi language and customs of the Qu'im. I will continue to write down what I learn so that others may do the same.

Carrie Wilmarth

And it Happened in Paradise

Oil Painting

Calliope Third Prize 2017 - Nonfiction

Ashly Barrenechea

Mr. Winchester

He was six feet tall, pale, and had the bluest eyes I have ever witnessed a person having. His hair was as white as snow and he had the bushiest eyebrows. He was a well-groomed man, never forgetting to shave and spray on cologne. A smile appeared on his wrinkled face whenever he heard, "Mr. Winchester! I'm here!" I would run up to him, with a beaming smile, my arms reaching towards him. He would quickly extend both arms, lift me up, and give me a kiss on the cheek.

My father used to work as a porter at a condominium complex in Arlington. He would clean Mr. Winchester's windows and help him run errands. My father and Mr. Winchester formed a friendship. I was introduced to Mr. Winchester at the tender age of five. Since I was an only child, my dad would take me to work during the weekends. I recall our first encounter; it is a vivid memory.

He was sitting down behind an enormous mahogany wooden desk, his face emotionless, wintry colored eyebrows hiding his eyes. He was reading the morning newspaper while drinking black coffee, no cream. "Hello, Chester. This is my daughter, Ashly," my father introduced me. Mr. Winchester's icy blue eyes found themselves on mine. "Hi," was all I could say. I did not feel intimidated, nor scared, just amazed at the color of his eyes. I've never seen eyes so blue; his pupils were surrounded by an icy glacier, hints of hazel dotted spontaneously. His hand was reaching out towards mine. I stared at his pale hand before enveloping mine with his. "It's nice to meet you, Ash," he said as he smiled down at me.

I visited him every weekend; we became partners in crime. He was an elderly man, needing assistance for most activities. Yet, whenever aid was offered, he denied it. Mr. Winchester was a tenacious man, with a plethora of kindness. "Here, I bought you your favorite," he handed me a chocolate muffin with chocolate chips in them. I eagerly bit into the chocolatey goodness. While I ate, he pulled out a book titled *The Hunt For the Seventh*, and began reading it to me. I was intrigued by the murder mystery in the book. He made me fond of mysteries, crime and murder documentaries.

Mr. Winchester kept reading books to me. We would sit on the couch, with a knitted blanket, cups of hot chocolate, and he would read to me. Tracing his pointer finger through every word, making sure that I read along with him, made me a better reader. He praised education at the highest standard, not wanting me to end up uneducated. Due to this weekly routine, I became the epitome of a good student. A new trait awakened inside of me; a voracious hunger for knowledge.

Weeks, months, and years went by. We kept the same routine every weekend. He started teaching me about Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians. I took an interest in learning about their gods, and way of living. I soon began to conduct my own research about life in the ancient world. Mr. Winchester played a vital role in my educational development. He cared as much as my parents did. He was someone I could ask questions to, and I would receive an answer.

On my eighth birthday, he gave me a koala bear. “Happy Birthday! Here,” he handed me a box wrapped in pink wrapping paper. “Don’t be shy; open it,” he instructed me. I did as I was told. I gently ripped the pink paper off the box, and opened the lid. Smiling gently at the present I received, I looked at him, and muttered a quiet, “thank you.” I held the stuffed animal close to my chest, admiring the realness of its complexion, and how detailed its feature were. Fast forward ten years, I still have the stuffed animal with me.

My father took me to work one day, and just as I was going to start heading towards Mr. Winchester’s apartment, he stopped me. “Honey, Mr. Winchester… he moved, he is living with his family back in Missouri.” Tears started to form around my eyes, but I was smiling. I was happy that Mr. Winchester went back to Missouri; I felt bittersweet knowing he left. “I hope he is happy, I bet he is living in a big house with lots of dogs. Did you know he likes German Shepherds, Daddy?” I told my father. I was genuinely happy for Mr. Winchester, but saddened that he left without a word.

Once my father and I arrived home, he told me to take a seat. “Ash, I don’t know how to tell you this, but Mr. Winchester is not with us anymore.” “I know; he moved back to Missouri.” “No, sweetheart, he passed away.” My turned eyes bloodshot red, fingers started to tremble, voice disappeared, and hot tears made their way down my face. He died, and my father wanted to protect me from the truth. I was not sure how I felt; all I know is that my body went numb, and my chest started pounding harshly. My breathing was not steady, it was uneven. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you earlier. I couldn’t bring myself to tell you. I can’t hurt you.” my father said as he wrapped me in a strong embrace. We both started crying together, and I stayed on his lap, hugging him.

Mr. Winchester will always remain in my heart. A person who took a great interest in me, and my education, will forever live in my memories. I thank him sometimes whenever I am at church. I want him to know that I have not forgotten. He will forever be immortal to my father and me.

Dawoon Jeong

Gourds: Study of Striation

Oil Painting

Calliope Third Prize 2017 - ESL Prose

Mariam Aljifri

From Failing to All A's

Have you ever thought that a person could make a huge change in your life? People can make a lot of good or bad changes in your life. That depends on the person you are dealing with, but they can definitely affect your life. One day when I thought I was going to fail my class, a great person helped me, but by using a good strategy, and a great way - a way I will never forget!

That day I realized that I was not just thinking that I was going to fail the class. I was literally failing it. I had an "F." I saw it on Blackboard. Then I went to the teacher to ask her how I could fix it? She said, "The final exam is your last chance." That day I felt like I was drowning. I was hopeless. I was so sad when I went home, and I asked everyone for help, but they told me that they could not do anything for me, because I was the one who was attending the class. I thought about it all night. In the morning, the first thing I did when I got to school was talk to my teacher and ask her to give me a chance, but she told me that I had lost all of my chances. After our long conversation, she agreed to give me another chance, and gave me a paper to write, but all I could get was half of the grade or less. The last thing my teacher told me was, " Think about the things you always do and see if they are good for you or not."

After I thought about what my teacher said, I found that she was right. I had more reasons to fail the class than pass it. I thought about all the reasons I used to not pay attention in class. I acted in class as I act in my home, in my bedroom. I used to use my phone the whole time, text my friends, talk to my friends in class, laugh, and think about other things in class. The teacher didn't like it, but she never used to say anything. At the same time, instead of yelling at me, she gave me bad grades, to make me think why I got this grade. I couldn't care less! I used to sit in the back, didn't study, or do my work and homework until I saw the "F." Not attending the class was a problem also. I used to skip class or go to class late. I also had difficulty understanding the language, but that was out of my hands. I couldn't do anything about it. At that time I was new here. After thinking about all of the things I had done, I said that I deserved it, and if I wanted a better grade I would have to work for it. You will never fail if you do things the way they are supposed to be done.

Everything can be fixed but we shouldn't wait until it is too late to fix them, because they won't be fixed. I realized that I messed up when it was almost too late, so I started fixing things late. I didn't have that much hope. I started sitting in the front, paying attention, not using my phone, and attending class on time. The things I did helped me a little, but I got the actual help from my teacher.

Have you ever thought that someone doesn't like you because that person was pushing you, while that person is doing you a huge favor? That is what happened to me. The teacher refused to give me any chance, and she was so strict, she used to give me bad grades. What my teacher used to do made me think that she didn't like me, and she just wanted me to

fail the class, and not help me. Well, that was what made me work hard. One day I opened blackboard, and I found that I had a B+!!! I didn't expect that at all. It turned out that my teacher actually helped me and did me a huge favor. It turned out that she was nice, and all she wanted was to help me. She really did help me, but not just in her class, but in all of my classes. I have never gotten less than an A in all of my classes, two years after I took her class.

Rashika Budhathoki

Journey

Photograph

Poetry

Claire Quin

Prose Poem for the Ocean

I'm the kind of bird that lives underwater for centuries then surfaces to fill my mouth with sand. The sea disgorges water upward, and as the drops evaporate into the sky they find themselves addicted to flight. "My cousin is a cumulonimbus," they warble, "I was born to be boundless."

Whirlpools and eddies gurgle through the sea's jagged shark teeth on the inhale, and this girl skims the rock pools for geriatric fish to tickle from the water, granddaddies whose flesh flakes from the needly ribs in patterns. "Look," she pantomimes to you, because you don't speak her language, "This is how you eat the heart."

Back now, the raindrops fall against the grain of the sea and rub it raw. The cliffs catch a trawler in their gray moue. "Why?" The rain drums into the sea, "Why do we always return to where we began?"

Hollow seagull bones click in the wind, still articulated, some still clinging to patchy feather cover, the almost-hands uncovered at the wingtips knocking lonely against driftwood. They sing, "Where are our bodies? Where do we belong?"

Fiction

Stephen J. Murphy

Looking Through the Keyhole

I'm at the bottom of a stairwell with no recollection of how I came to be here. I quickly survey my surroundings. There is a door behind me but before I even attempt to open it I already know that it will be locked; however, I give it a go anyway. The only place to go is up.

My first few steps are slow, unsure of themselves, testing the steps and testing my own ability to be sure I can make the climb up the stairs. My legs are shaky at first but I realize that's only because of the initial doubt that was in my mind. With the next few steps my legs again feel confident, strong.

As I continue to climb I notice the stairs are gradually getting steeper and steeper. They get to the point where I'm starting to get a bit nervous about falling backwards and lean forward to use my hands as well as my feet.

Straining, I lift my head to see what it is I'm climbing towards. Ahead all I can make out is a dark doorway. So instead of concentrating on the unknown I turn my attention to what I'm doing now. I take in as much detail as I can. My breathing is labored and I feel a cool bead of sweat run down my neck. The carpet is a deep blue that reminds me of my scuba adventures.

As the stairs are reaching what must be their vertices I realize I'm right below the doorway. Still dark and ominous as I saw it before. I take a moment to gather my courage as I breach the plain and enter.

Just as my eyes begin to embrace the darkness of the hallway I am blinded by a flash of light. Flinching backwards I throw my arms up in an attempt to shield my eyes. After several moments I'm able to start blinking my vision back, still blurry at first.

I feel a breeze blow the hair back from my forehead. Along with the breeze comes a familiar smell. A pungent, and to most, a foul smell—I recognize it as the smell of the bay near the ocean. Though the smell is usually of wet marshlands filled with excrement and decaying fish it has always been a smell my mind associates with life. Crossing that marshland usually meant the beginning of another leisurely week at the beach.

In front of me is yet another doorway. Through it lies a double bed with a comforter laid out perfectly. On the opposing wall I see a picture of myself that I do not recognize. It's a simple picture of me smiling and no distinguishable background. Whilst searching my memories for this moment I hear the distant thundering of waves against a beach. I hadn't paid any mind to the open window next to the picture and I realize this is where the breeze, noise, and smells are coming from. Just as I step forward something grasps the corner of my eye.

There is another room directly to my right that holds the exact same appearance of the other room. Startled, I glance back to make sure it isn't some kind of hallucination. The other room is there after all. Doing a quick three-sixty I realize there are four of the same exact rooms. All are equally spread apart; the room where I am standing appears to be a

perfect circle. The rooms appear to be the north, south, east, and west of a compass and I am standing in the middle, as in where the needle were to balance.

The rooms seem to have the exact same layout. The same deep blue carpet of the stairwell. A twin bed with the comforter neatly made with one corner peeled back as if inviting someone to slip in for a nap. I become disoriented, forgetting which room is the one I had first laid eyes upon. After a moment I realize there is a difference amongst the rooms.

There is still a picture of me in each room; however, each picture is different. The one I recognize is the first one I saw of myself, alone, a bit older and seemingly happy. There is another of what appears to me a slightly older me embracing a woman I don't recognize. In the next picture of me, I can hardly recognize myself: with a rugged beard, my arms are outstretched as I appear to have summited a peak with a never-ending valley in the background, a large backpack keeping me hunched over. In the final picture, I actually don't recognize myself but simply assume it to be me, as an old man. It appears to be a family picture. A large group of people of all ages with myself and another unrecognizable woman as the center piece.

My initial instinct is to go into the rooms and investigate. See if there are any other defining differences or anything else in the rooms I cannot see. I stop just inches before the room with the picture of myself and a beautiful woman. Unable to say how I know but I know, as soon as I enter one of these rooms the door will shut behind me and disappear just as before with the stairwell door. This means that once I make the decision of which room to enter, I will not be able to undo it.

How am I to decide which room to enter? All I can make judgments on are the innocuous photographs that all appear to be future selves of me. Must I make a decision? After a moment I start to feel claustrophobic. As silent as it is I can sense the walls pressing in on me even as the room maintains a perfect circle. There is no time to sit about and contemplate which path to take. The time to choose is now for I feel I run a risk of being crushed if I do not.

Overwhelmed I bend down to catch my breath. I close my eyes and count each breath and concentrate on only that and allow my surroundings to fade away. One, two, three…

I stand back up ready to reassess the situation. After a few quick glances between rooms I notice something on one of the walls between two of the doors. I can't quite make it out, simply a little black dot, until I move closer. I recognize it as a keyhole. One that I am only familiar with through old movies. An old fashion key hole that you are able to see through. Without hesitation I bend down to look through.

At first I can't make anything out. It's much darker on the other side in contrast to this blinding white room. After several anxious seconds I can see something moving. There are bushes moving that are surrounded by trees; there is a forest on the other side. Taken aback by this, I stand up to take a look at the hole again.

I quickly rub my eyes to make sure I'm not seeing things. The keyhole is still there and above it a doorknob. Perfectly set into a wooden door that was not there

before. This door is closed unlike the others and in abstract contrast to everything else I have seen thus far, this door is a vast spectrum of vivid colors. Colors that are in different geometric patterns constantly shifting this way and that.

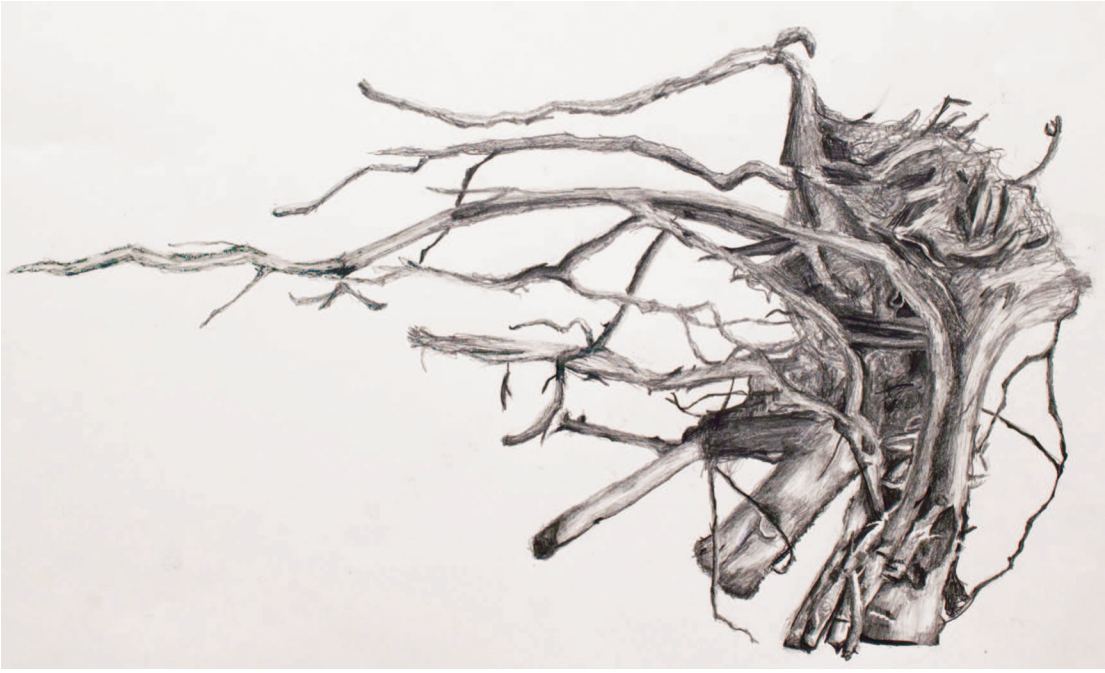
I step towards to the door with my arm extended eager to turn the knob and step through. Before I do, I quickly look back as if to say goodbye to the other rooms. They have already vanished. All that surrounds me is a vast expanse of white space that looks like it could stretch to infinity. They knew I would not be going their way.

Confident, I open the door and step through. An invigorating gust of mossy air brushes by me, welcoming me. The stars are in full bloom tonight with a crescent moon about to set over the horizon.

Unlike the rooms, there are no boundaries here. I can sense a whole world ahead of me. The door from whence I came has disappeared like I predicted it would. As always I must go onward. And as if reading my thoughts there seems to be a path marked ahead of me, lined with the beckoning of fireflies. As if for the first time, I take a step forth…

Dimitry Joshua Meister

Root as Comet



Graphite & Charcoal Pencil on Paper

ESL Prose

Yekaterina Le

Two Ways to Belong in America

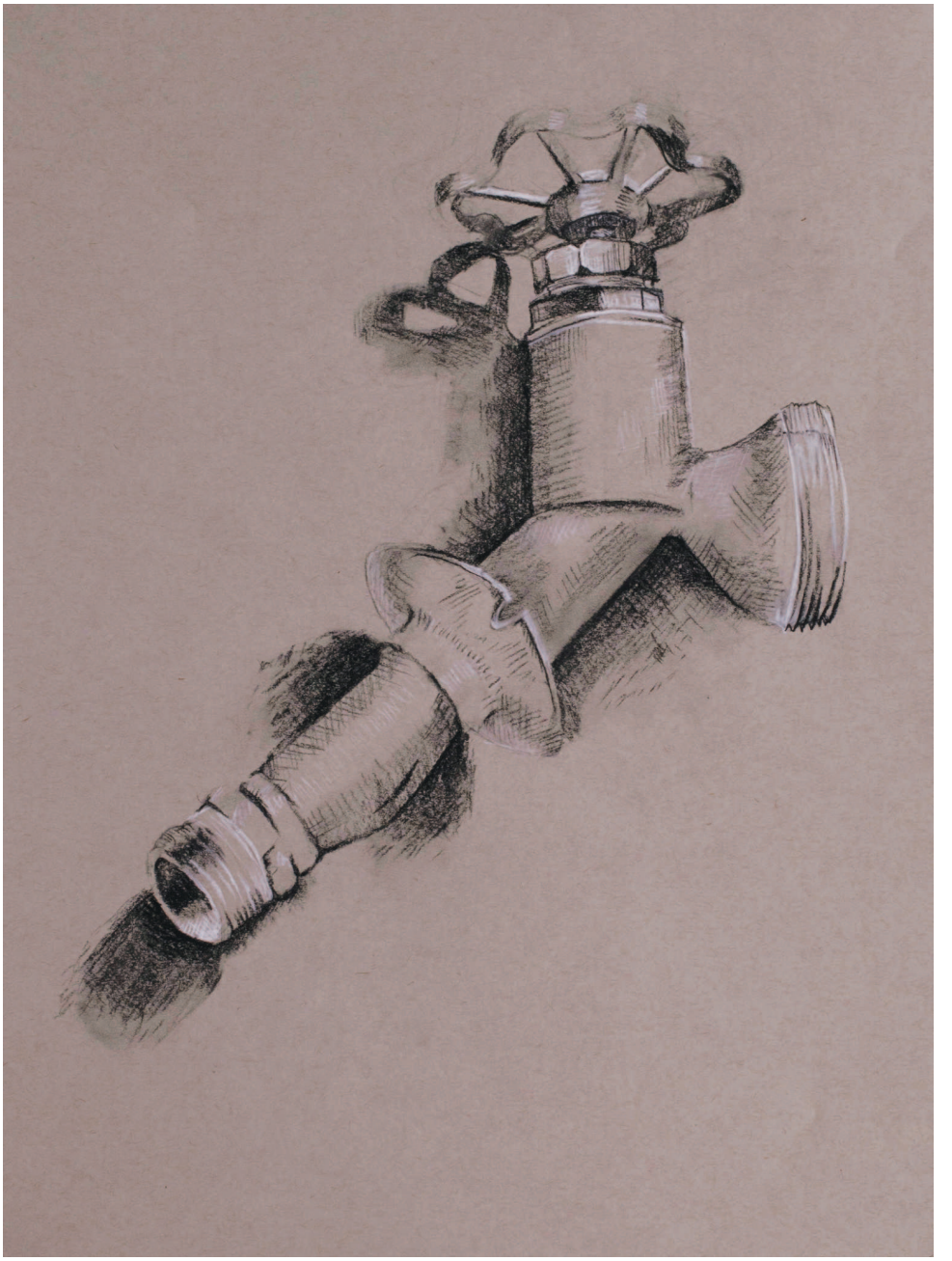
"Two Ways to Belong in America" by Bharati Mekherjee, is an article written about two sisters, Mira and Bharati Mukhenjee, from India, who came to America to get their degrees and both stayed to live in America. The difference between the sisters was that Bharati applied for citizenship as soon as she could and Mira did not want to give up her Indian citizenship because her plan was to eventually return home to Calcutta when she retired, so she got and kept her Green Card. Both sisters had good jobs and enjoyed lives with their families. Once the situation for noncitizens changed when Congress was considering to reducing benefits for Green Card holders in 1996, Mira did not feel the same anymore like in the past when she felt safe here as a non-citizen.

When Bharati decided to stay in America to live and work, she made the right decision to apply for citizenship. She made her choice in life, got married, had a good job and did not need to worry about her visa status anymore, so she could feel like a citizen with all the rights of the United States. The other sister made the opposite decision and decided to keep her home country citizenship and she met several problems in her life such as the law that precludes immigrants from getting benefits from the government even after many years of work for the United States.

The word immigrant brings such thoughts like a person who decided to leave his home country and move to another country with future plans to stay and live there. My son and I moved to America and we have lived here for one and half years with Green Cards and with our present time president, we have more restrictions and the situation is changing in different ways. I do respect my home country and I would like to keep my citizenship there but with more and more restrictions from the current USA president, I may consider applying for American citizenship, because my family is here. However, I feel in a way that everyone here is an immigrant and the difference between us is only the time each person has stayed here, longer or shorter.

Yanna Garecka

Faucet



Charcoal and Chalk on Grey Paper

Poetry

Ayse Erva Mangan

Who is Free on the Mountain Top?

I stand on the top of the highest mountain
The wind trying tirelessly to knock me down
While I try to hold on to the merciful wings of the doves flying by
The wind howling to me with its shriek like voice
I want to let go of the wings and close my ears

The sun is shining right before my eyes
Coming closer and closer
Flashing every bit of my regrets
And I hug them
They are my wind

The mountain starts shaking, and I cry with relief
I let the birds go, free at last
How beautiful freedom looks
The wind stops howling it says it forgives me
Sun goes on to its lunch break

I am left with the feathers I stole from freedom
I am too heavy, with my shoulders heavy with regrets and their burden
I can't fly with three feathers
I can't be free without the birds

The birds sing the song of the skies
And the skies are delighted thus they reply
Be grateful for your wings for they are the ones who fly
And with glee I cry
You are not free
Just as I can't be with feathers of three
Who is free on the mountain top?
The wind, the feathers, the birds or me?
So the birds fall down
So the mountain sinks to the ground
And only I am left with the wind and its howl

Poetry

Brandon Murphy

Sound Within My Soul

I've been introduced on the stage
They all came to see me play
And tell a story I've always held in
Count it off and the music begins
The drums play and keyboard aligns
My eyes are closed and think in my mind
The scotch, the pain, the nights and days
Of bobbled emotions words can't say
They will be heard through a simple blow
Listen to the sound within my soul.

The beat is slow and the tone is smooth
Just like my pops, when he was in a good mood
Showed his love for a limited time
Always comin' home late at night
To the smell of scotch and women's perfume
It wasn't Mama's, but she knew
So he went off astray and a seed was sown
Of sadness spreading all through our home
This is what's said through a simple blow
This is the sound within my soul.

Intense smoothness in a mellow atmosphere
Like the homecoming dance my senior year
With a girl whose heart was close to mine
Promised to love each other 'til the end of time
Time flew by with days counting down
To dressing up wearing a cap and gown
Life hit us both with different plans
So one last time, we held hands
It seemed so unreal it felt like a lie
Until we kissed and said goodbye
This is what's said through a simple blow
This the sound within my soul.

The beat still remained the same
Even when the music began to fade

So did the memories that were sustained
As I let them go, tears fell like rain
Pain held for so long with so much complication
My eyes were open to a standing ovation
Everything was said through a simple blow
This was the sound within my soul.

DeAndre Miller

Past Meets Present

Photograph

Toni Elmore

Fire and Ice

Painting

Nonfiction

Duong Thuy Nguyen

My First Gift

My first gift that I have ever received in my life was my name, which my beloved father put a lot of meaning inside. Years ago, when I was tiny as a bean inside my mother's womb, my father had to work overseas for five years. Before leaving, he told my mother that because he could not be there when I was born, he really wanted to be the one who gave me my first gift in my life, which was my name.

My father named me Duong Thuy Nguyen. He chose my first name from the name of his small hometown, Hai Duong. With this first name, he hoped that although I would be born and grow up in a big city, I would always remember about my roots and ancestors in Hai Duong. The truth is he could not know whether I would be a boy or a girl at that time. Therefore, he told my mother that if I was a girl, my middle name would be my mother's first name. If I was a boy, it would be his first name. He wanted to put his or my mother's name in the middle of my name to remind me that whenever or wherever I would go, my parents would always be beside me.

Because I was a girl, he named my middle name after my mother's first name. My father really loved this name because if my first and middle name was combined, "Thuy Duong," it means the water in the oceans. He wished I would be beautiful, gentle, flexible, and strong as the water in the big oceans. Truthfully, he loved my name, and he really put his belief and hopes on me with this meaningful name.

When I was about three and a half years old, my father came back home. I still remember the moment that I saw him the first time. There was a tall man who came to me and gently said, "Hi my Thuy Duong, do you like your name, my first gift for you?" Yes, that man is my dear father. Unfortunately, I did not like my name as much as my father did. When I was studying in elementary school, I did not care about my name much. However, my name bothered me when I was in middle school and high school.

In my language, my first name has multiple meanings. One of them means male, and if we combine my first name with another word, we will have a complex word which means the reproductive organ of a man. Some naughty boys in my class often teased me with this name. Of course, I hated that, so I resisted very strongly. However, the more I resisted, the more they teased me. One time, someone stuck a note with that "bad complex word" on my back. When I went out of my class, many students looked and laughed at me. I did not know what was happening until one of my friends saw and told me about that note. However, at that time, many students saw that, and I was really embarrassed. As many thoughtless teenagers, I felt very angry, and I blamed my father about that name. He just let me complain, and did not say anything until I finished. Then, he just sadly said sorry if I didn't like it. Although I apologized him after that, I felt regret for everything I said to my poor father. In fact, after that, I did not hate my name as much as before, but I still feel uneasy when some of my classmates

still called me with that unexpected nickname.

However, years later, after being married and living far away from my family, I have started to realize the meaning of my name as well as my father's love. Then, I have started to love my name to the point that I don't want to choose an English name although my name is quite difficult to pronounce in the U.S. I am really proud of my first gift and I am so happy to be my father's daughter. Clearly, for some people, Duong Thuy Nguyen might not a lovely name, but for me, it is a very valuable name since it was my father's gift as well as his love for me. Therefore, now, whenever calling him, I always proudly tell him that, "Hi dad, this is your Thuy Duong."

Elena Rivera

Shells Emerging

Oil Painting

Poetry

Robin Christine Messner

We Are the Ones

We are the ones to change the world
We are the ones that are free
In a country of destitute and newfound destruction
It's now up to you and me
A generation of indifference and pain
Is tearing us slowly apart
You can start by sharing your voice
And screaming your thoughts from your heart
It's not gonna happen in just one day
It takes a world of change
But sitting there won't start the process
It will only keep things the same
All it takes is a second of thought
And a desire to care for the weak
There are people suffering in our own backyard
So open your eyes and see
Our country is separated through selfishness and pride
A fate that was destined to come
But it's only a reaction to our current situation
Will you stand up and fight? Or Run?

Evan Thomas Conroy

Road Less Travelled

Photograph

Nonfiction

Nisreen Al-Suqi

The Journey

The taxi was pulling up to the top of the orange-brown mountain. Along the mountain were small trees and hanging off were juicy green olives. The only green in sight; blankets of orange sand swept the roads and pillars of stone. Rocks began trickling to the back of the wheel as we struggled to the top and weaved between other cars. I was flying toward the desert edge. I felt as though I would fall off the face of the earth if the car were a foot to the right. It was my first time in Palestine after a long eleven years. Children of all ages scurried in front of moving cars, passing us like the clouds in the sky; it was hard to see them all. My eyes searched and searched for something familiar. There wasn't a Burger king or Safeway in sight. I could see small stores with Arabic writing sprawled over the top. Bakers selling fresh loaves of bread surrounded the streets. Hookah smoke fluttered the air from the markets down the mountain. Soldiers constantly passed wearing the same thing and holding rifles that shined as bright as the sun did that day. It was about ninety degrees but, if my uncle saw me in shorts, I would be dead. A rainbow of scarves all stood before me. Each color on top of a different head. My head felt as naked as the scenery after seeing nearly every woman wearing one. My face was as long as the plane ride; I was not pleased. Thoughts of how the next month without internet, friends, and American food began to circle my mind like the Israeli soldiers circling the streets.

The gusts of hot air began to sit as we came to halt. Sweat slid down my cheek; I could taste the saltiness on the tip of my tongue. A vaguely familiar red door peered ahead of me. The cement walls with cracks along the side had small flowers sprouting from the mold. It was my amo's house. Smiles stretched from ear to ear as my father's brother, his wife and children came towards us. My cheeks were bloody red from all the wet kisses they laid upon them. I followed my father's footsteps trying to remember where I had left off eleven years prior. It was baba's first time back home too; the place where he took his first breath. The place where he had to become a man at the age of nine and work his first job. The same age where he had to flee from the Zionists as they invaded innocent homes of my people. He was a local and I was just a traveler.

The space lit up from the natural light of the sun peering through the window and the walls smelled of shai; there was tea with fresh mint churning in the kitchen. Blackberries, figs, oranges, and bananas were rested on the table. Multiple Qurans scrolled across the shelf and beside it was an enlarged photo of a man who looked like he could be my brother. It was black and white with a date written on the bottom right; July 12th, 1975. His arms were long and lean like his legs. The corners of his face were sharp like a dagger and he had wavy hair combed to one side. Although he didn't smile, his eyes did, as they looked back at me. My gaze moved to my father's face, his round cheeks pushing his eyes up to a squint. It then appeared to me that his

smiling eyes stared at me the way the photo had. His bald spot at the top of his head glistened as the sun struck it. I quickly snapped my head back to the photo and back at baba and without saying a word, he answered my question. That silence diminished with waves of questions flying in from Mayada, my uncle's daughter. "keef emreeka?" she asked. "what's America like?" I then translated to myself. My thoughts were as scrambled as the drivers on the lane-less roads we travelled on moments prior. My eyes struggled to meet hers the same way I struggled to put my broken Arabic together to answer her question. "AlhamduAllah" I replied; "Thank God"; the answer I had to any question I could not answer. My stare moved to the white windows. Clothes my sister once wore were now hand-me downs, sprawled with clothespins on the wires outside. The aroma of fresh bread spread into the walls of the house. In the distance, thuds echoed between the mountains, probably just some construction like on the streets back home of Arlington, I told myself. I was in my own world hiding from the awkward silences that filled the room up until the Athan began to play; the call of prayer bestowing upon me for the first time in so long. A calm swept over me then. For a moment, I felt a smirk sweep over my face.

The legs on the clock were moving fast now, and the heat on my skin from the sun was replaced with goosebumps as night grew. We turned the TV on, and for hours Al Jazeera played as background noise. Real raw footage of what really happens in Jerusalem was on the screen. I couldn't help but peer over Mayada's shoulder to see the TV. A thirteen-year-old girl was coming from school when an Israeli soldier shot and killed her. Her blood laid beneath her like a bath. A mortified expression swept over my face. The ambient noise of the TV replayed the same familiar thuds that I heard echoing outside the window hours earlier. It was not construction after all but, rather the deconstruction and dissection of homes, families, bones, legacies and so much more.

Night turned to dusk as they would tell stories of baba as a young boy. He made baskets with my sido to place the olives once ripen, while his much younger siblings and mom stayed home. Money did not grow as fast as the trees unfortunately so his toy he often played with was a rock he named Hady. It was like a book of his life and I was just painting a picture. Stories of him living in a cave and hiding from Zionists to him crashing his car off a mountain. I wanted to cradle my father in that moment. I felt so unworthy. To know all the things I had asked for in the past, crying bloody murder when I didn't get my way. I was disgusted for thinking I was better than any of them. His innocence had been ripped out of him like the lives of the young Palestinians that die every day here. The difference was that he survived. He left this city he once called home to make sure I didn't end up like the little girl that didn't make it home from school. My feelings were as disconnected as the wall that separated the Palestinians from the Jews. Did I enjoy being here? I asked myself. A chatter of Arabic bellowing grew between baba and amo. In that moment I wanted so badly to understand what they were saying. In that moment I wanted to be a true Palestinian. In that moment I did not mind being away from home because for the first time in my life I was putting the pieces baba's life together. In that moment I knew that the next thirty days ahead of me would not be enough after all.

Alexander Tsapos

Everything in Balance

Oil Painting

Poetry

Willie Gomez

Lock my Body Can't Trap My Mind

They can lock my body, but they can't trap my mind.
They can take away my freedom, they can take away my rights,
But they can't take away my vision, they can't make me blind.
My soul will only turn to darkness if I turn out the lights.

I know my journey's just begun and there are no guarantees,
But if I'm still here, it's for a reason, and that much I must believe.
If doubt ever crosses my mind I'll pray to God on my knees
Because my saving grace is my faith and that will never leave.

Every day I will escape in these books that I read
Every night I am free, even if only in my dreams.
Reading and writing daily the only therapy I need,
To drift away from this nightmare as never-ending as it seems.

In these books and in my own stories, peace and strength I will find.
Lock my body but you can't trap my mind.

Hanna Karen

Precarious Teacups

Oil Painting

Nonfiction

Sai Pethe

From a Feminist, To the NOVA Community

Inspiration comes to different people in many ways. For me, the inspiration had always been there. All I needed was the drive to make things happen. That need was fulfilled when I attended the International Youth Leaders' Assembly at the World Bank and the United Nations this past summer. Both events included young leaders who were making a difference in their communities around the world. My passion for change found a new level that week. So, after coming back to NOVA in the fall, I had the urge to make a difference in the NOVA community. That is how it started; that is how I organized the HeforShe panel discussion on gender equality.

I knew I wanted to create a discussion. I always want to talk about issues I care about. I thought that maybe this time, I'll let other people do the talking and just sit and watch. Creating a discussion on gender equality was important to me because that's how change happens: by talking. The more you discuss these difficult issues, the more people are aware, the better. I grew up in India, in a society where sexism is as common as musical numbers in Bollywood movies. I saw it all around me. However, I was never given a chance to talk about it. That is something that always stuck with me. I strived to make my panel into an open conversation about gender, for both young men and women. HeforShe was a perfect campaign to spread on campus. It was launched by the United Nations to get young men involved in the fight against gender inequality. I look at the message of HeforShe this way: men should fight with women to achieve gender equality, but not fight for them. The message was powerful. It really resonated with me, and I wanted to tell my community at NOVA about it.

I chose my panelists carefully. I asked people who were most involved in the NOVA community. I was extremely grateful that my panelists presented their ideas, experiences, and opinions so brilliantly. We had discussion about many things – from toxic masculinity to domestic violence. Not only were the panelists passionate about these issues, they were also fully engaged with the audience. The audience showed obvious passion about the issues we talked about, and contributed to the discussion with their own unique ideas. A great contribution to this conversation was a speech by Dr. Gabriel Hudson. Prof. Hudson talked about how gender became such a strict social construct. His speech helped lead the discussion in a very progressive direction.

As the moderator of this panel, my experience was a bit different from those who attended the event as audience members. I was finally able to do something with all that passion burning inside me. I was finally able to engage my college community into a conversation that is generally not discussed openly. For me, that dialogue was the most important part of the event. There were some disagreements, and even some heated arguments. However, I was happy because people were talking. That day, I real ized how important it is to create a safe space for people to discuss their opinions on crucial topics such as gender equality. Communication is sometimes the best way to

look at our differences and attempt to solve them.

I made sure that there was an equal number of men and women on my panel for this very reason. I wanted to create a dialogue that was unbiased and true. There are ways that some choose to deal with oppression, and often, these ways include violence. It does not have to always be this way. The world has enough issues that are being resolved through violence. Gender equality should not be one of those issues. By that I mean, young women like Malala Yousafzai should not be shot in the head for going to school. Instead, young women like Malala should be encouraged to pursue higher education. They should be encouraged to become lawyers, doctors, engineers and presidents. The only way to achieve that reality is through changing the way society views women. And the only way society can change the way society looks at women is through communicating, debating, and having discussions. That is what I wanted to achieve through my panel, and I think I was quite successful.

Cory Helms

Bluidity

Ceramic

NOVA
Northern Virginia
Community College